

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2196

INFO USIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

UNCLAS CANBERRA 6845

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PFOR, AS

SUBJ: AUSTRALIAN EDITORIALS CRITICIZE CAIRNS'

STATEMENTS ON U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM

1. ALL MAJOR AUSTRALIAN NEWSPAPERS HAVE EDITORIALIZED ON DECEMBER 17 AND 18 ABOUT REMARKS REPORTEDLY MADE BY MINISTER FOR OVERSEAS TRADE CAIRNS DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO HANOI. CAIRNS IS TAKEN TO TASK FOR STEPPING OUTSIDE HIS PORTFOLIO TO DEAL WITH FOREIGN AFFAIRS MATTERS AND FOR UNNECESSARILY IRRITATING RELATIONS WITH U.S. GOVERNMENT OVER U.S. ROLE IN VIETNAM. SEVERAL EDITORIALS SUGGEST CAIRNS SHOULD SOMEHOW BE MUZZLED ALTHOUGH MOST INDICATE PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM LACKS ESSENTIAL AUTHORITY TO REMOVE CAIRNS FROM CABINET. EDITORIALS ALSO STATE WHITLAM IS IN POOR POSITION TO CASTIGATE CAIRNS WHEN WHITLAM HIMSELF IS IN FRYING PAN FOR UNTOWARD REMARKS HE RECENTLY MADE ABOUT SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT.

2. MOST CRITICAL EDITORIAL APPEARED IN SYDNEY MORNING HERALD WHICH NOTES THAT IN CRITICIZING U.S. POLICY IN VIETNAM DR. CAIRNS WAS IN EFFECT ALSO CRITICIZING AUSTRALIAN CONTRIBUTION TO THAT CONFLICT AND HUMAN SACRIFICES MADE BY AUSTRALIAN FORCES THERE. EDITORIAL UNCLASSIFIED

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GOES ON TO STATE MAJORITY OF AUSTRALIANS HAVE NO SENSE

OF GUILT ABOUT AUSTRALIAN INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM WHICH WAS TAKEN TO HALT AGGRESSION AND HONOR AN ALLIANCE. SMH ALSO POINTS OUT HARM CAIRNS' REMARKS WILL DO IN WASHINGTON AND IN MANY SOUTHEAST ASIAN CAPITALS OTHER THAN SAIGON WHO REGARD A COMMUNIST VICTORY IN VIETNAM AS GREATEST THREAT TO STABILITY IN REGION. IN SUM, EDITORIAL SAYS THAT AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN POLICY HAS LED TO CONFUSION ABOUT AUSTRALIA'S INTENTIONS IN AREA AND CALLS FOR A "COHERENT AND CONSISTENT FOREIGN POLICY".

3. MAIN THRUST OF EDITORIAL IN AUSTRALIAN AGE DECEMBER 18 IS THAT CAIRNS' STATEMENTS MAY HAVE MARINALLY NEGATIVE EFFECT UPON PROSPECTS FOR VIETNAM PEACE SETTLEMENT COMING AS THEY DID ON THE EVE OF MEETING BETWEEN AMERICAN SECRETARY OF STATE AND HANOI'S LE DUC THO. MOREOVER, EDITORIAL POINTS OUT CAIRNS HAS BEEN MINISTER FOR ALMOST A YEAR AND MUST REALIZE THAT HE CANNOT SPEAK AS INDIVIDUAL SEPARATELY FROM HIS POSITION AS THIRD RANKING MEMBER OF THE GOVERNMENT.

4. CANBERRA TIMES EDITORIAL DWELLS ON DAMAGE TO AUSTRALIA AND TO CREDIBILITY OF MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS OUTSIDE OF AUSTRALIA WHICH BOTH CAIRNS AND PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM HAVE INVOKED BY RECENT FORAYS INTO FOREIGN POLICY. TIMES EDITORIAL SUGGESTS THAT U.S. PROTEST OVER CAIRNS' REMARKS ALTHOUGH PROPER IN CIRCUMSTANCES COULD BE INTERPRETED AS DEMONSTRATION OF SUPPORT FOR SAIGON GOVERNMENT RATHER THEN EVIDENCE OF DISPLEASURE WITH AUSTRALIA.

5. SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS REPORT PRIME MINISTER, CAIRNS AND SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WALLER MET DECEMBER 17 TO DISCUSS CAIRNS' REMARKS IN HANOI. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE HOWEVER TO SHOW THAT SUCH MEETING ACTUALLY OCCURRED NOR HAS ANY REPORT OF SUCH DISCUSSION APPEARED. CAIRNS HAS REFUSED TO DISCUSS MATTER FURTHER WITH THE PRESS DESPITE AMPLE OPPORTUNITIES. DFA SOURCES INDICATE THEY DO NOT BELIEVE TEXT OF CAIRNS' REMARKS IN HANOI EXISTS ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE ATTEMPTED TO OBTAIN SUCH TEXT.  
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**TAGS:** PFOR, AS, VS, VN, (CAIRNS)  
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